rejected the proposal with the direction to initiate the process of fresh selection. The post will be filled up after the approval of the Competent Authority.

2. **Director (Projects & Technical):** The proposal for appointment to the post was submitted to the Competent Authority on 16.7.2004 which had approved on 18.11.2004 subject to certain conditions. Action has been initiated in compliance of the directions of the competent authority.

3. **Director (Commercial):** The Public Enterprises Selection Board recommended the panel on 29.3.2004. The vigilance clearance in respect of No. 1 candidate is awaited from the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Deteriorating condition of MTNL and BSNL

81. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a survey conducted by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, it has been revealed that the quality of service has deteriorated:

(b) whether it is also a fact that both the Units of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited in Delhi and Mumbai and most of the telecom circles of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited failed to meet the quality of service norms; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Teledensity of Urban and Rural Areas

82. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rural teledensity is extremely low as compared to the urban teledensity;

(b) the details of present teledensity of rural and urban areas; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to remove the disparity between the rural and urban connectivity and also to increase the rural telecom penetration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As on 30.09.2004, the Rural Tele-density is 1.66% as against Urban Tele-density of 24.08%.

(c) (i) To minimise the gap between rural and urban areas, a non-lapsable Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has been set up to fund telecom services in the rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices. The scope of support from USOF scheme, apart from other services, covers VPTs in all revenue villages. As on 30.09.2004 523390 villages out of 607491 villages have been connected through Village Public Telephones (VPTs).

(ii) BSNL has also planned at least one WLL Base Transreceiver Station (BTS) in each Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCA) all over the country chiefly to cater to the demand in far-flung rural areas.

Provision of telephone facilities in the villages

83. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages in the country which are presently without telephone facility, district-wise; and

(b) the details of the steps, if any, taken by Government to provide telephone facility in these villages along with the time frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD NARAYAN RAO): (a) At present, 66,822 villages excluding depopulated villages, villages less than 100 population, villages affected by insurgency, inaccessible villages and villages lying in thick forest are without telephone facility in the country. Telecom circle-wise details of uncovered villages are given at Statement-I (*See* below). Secondary Switching Area-wise (SSA-wise) details of such villages are given at Statement-II (*See* below).